

You Drink & Drive. You Lose. National Mobilization OP-ED ARTICLE

This Holiday Season, Impaired Drivers Beware: *We will Find You and Lock You Up*

As a community we all support law enforcement efforts to protect us from theft, burglary, assault and terrorism. Yet, many otherwise law-biding citizens continue to view impaired driving merely as a harmless traffic offense. Don't be fooled. Impaired driving is one of the most often committed crimes, randomly killing someone every 30 minutes. That means you, your family or friends are equally likely to be innocent victims.

This year the chances are even greater that you or someone you know will be affected. Because of the extended holiday period, **[STATE/LOCAL ORGANIZATION]** is expecting an increase in the number of impaired driving fatalities.

Do you find hard to figure out if you've had too many drinks to drive — don't risk it. Impairment begins with the first drink and impaired driving is against the law. Most likely if you're feeling "buzzed" you are impaired and if you drive law enforcement will likely catch you.

As part of the *You Drink & Drive. You Lose.* National Mobilization, **[ORGANIZATION]** will be working with **[PARTNERS]** to protect everyone from impaired drivers during this busy time of the year. From December 20, 2002 to January 5, 2003 local and state officials will be out in full force conducting sobriety checkpoints and saturation patrols throughout **[COMMUNITY]** to arrest and prosecute these criminals to the fullest extent of the law.

There will be no warnings. Our message is simple – *You Drink and Drive. You Lose.* Violators can lose their licenses, time from their jobs, and lose money in high fines and court costs as well as possibly face imprisonment for repeat offenses, assault and vehicular manslaughter. Refuse a blood alcohol concentration test and you can lose your license on the spot and have your car impounded. You'll be spending your money on bail and towing fees instead of holiday gifts.

Why the tough stance? Despite tireless efforts by **[LOCAL PARTNERS]** to stop alcohol and drugged driving, many people mistakenly continue to dismiss impaired driving as if it were a speeding ticket. After years of gradual improvement, fatalities in alcohol-related crashes are on the rise nationally. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) estimates that in 2000, 17,380 people were killed in alcohol-related crashes, representing approximately 41 percent of the 41,945 total traffic fatalities. In 2001, 17,448 people were killed in alcohol-related crashes, again representing 41 percent of the 42,116 people killed in all traffic crashes.

As a nation, we've reached a crossroads in our efforts to prevent this deadly crime. America is at a crucial point where we must all do more if we are to significantly reduce the number of alcohol- and drug-related crashes. We must begin by recommitting and intensifying our national, State and local efforts. Each of us can do our part by designating a sober driver, stopping impaired family members and friends from getting behind the wheel, reporting impaired drivers to law enforcement officials, and teaching our young people safe, alcohol- and drug-free driving behavior.

[LOCAL ORGANIZATION] reminds everyone:

- Don't risk it – If you plan to drive, don't drink.
- Choose a sober designated driver before partying.
- Take mass transit, a taxicab or ask a friend to drive you home if you didn't plan in advance.
- Spend the night where the activity is being held.
- Report impaired drivers to law enforcement.

There is never enough help, and never too many voices. To learn how you can make a difference in **[COMMUNITY]**, please contact **[LOCAL CONTACT INFORMATION]**.

Sobriety checkpoints, saturation patrols, undercover officers and concerned citizens ... chances are if you drive impaired this holiday you'll get caught. This holiday and every day, please celebrate responsibly, designate a sober driver, take a taxicab, mass transit or chances are you'll be taking a ride straight to jail. Remember: *You Drink & Drive. You Lose.*

You Drink & Drive. You Lose. National Mobilization

Launched in December 1999, the *You Drink & Drive. You Lose.* National Mobilization is a partnership of criminal justice and traffic safety partners in all 50 States that is committed to reducing deaths from impaired driving. Thanks to the combined efforts of thousands of devoted public and private partners, more than 150 million Americans have learned about the effort from newspapers, the Internet, and from radio and television broadcasts. For more information about the National Mobilization, please visit www.nhtsa.dot.gov.

